



Unit .28

Session .03

Showing Christ In Times of Trials

Scripture



1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:11-17

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead **4** and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. **5** You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials **7** so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** because you are

receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ... **11** Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. **12** Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits. **13** Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority **14** or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. **15** For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. **16** Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Intro Options

Main Point:
When we honor God
through trials, the
difference Jesus makes
in our lives is made clear.

Option 1

As a large group, brainstorm places or situations where people might experience suffering. Hospitals and funeral homes will probably make the list, but so should schools, sports fields, and long lines at the drive-through; even homes and churches.

Once you have your list, give each student a sheet of paper. Instruct them to make “A Guide for Getting through Suffering” into a small pamphlet, a small poster, a booklet, or whatever else they can think of to do. Students should make a guide that can be given to anyone in any of the situations you listed. Their advice should apply specifically to the given situation, but the goal is to come up with principles that would apply to any situations involving suffering.

Have your students share their guides. What kinds of ideas did they come up with? Wherever their ideas overlap with the lesson, use their thoughts to introduce the session. For instance, they may have said that suffering is only temporary, that there was a reason for suffering, or that suffering would result in greater good (or glory) later. They might even have said that suffering could be a means of helping others.

Option 2

A prominent candy bar has its slogan, “What would you do for a...?” Your students are going to do some skits based on this question. Break them into small groups. Have each group brainstorm a prize they would like to win. It could be a million dollars, a vehicle, a trip, a day spent with their favorite celebrity or athlete, or anything else they can imagine. Once they’ve come up with their desired prize, they should create a skit showing what they would be willing to do for that prize. Their skit could be one big, long, grueling ordeal, or it could be a number of smaller trials they’ll undergo in exchange for that prize.

Let them prepare and share their skits. What kind of trials did they choose? Was there a connection between the sufferings they chose and the prizes they desired? Discuss how we desire that our sufferings have purpose. Athletes will choose suffering to get better at their sport; people will embrace the suffering of more schools to get a degree that will benefit them later. In today’s lesson, we’ll see that for Christians, all suffering is both temporary and purposeful.

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.



In Peter's first epistle, God's people are reminded that in Christ, we have a safe place of acceptance and hope, even as we face difficult things in our lives. From a cultural perspective, hope is a kind of wish—as in, I hope my dad buys me a new sports car for my birthday. From a biblical perspective, hope is the confident expectation that God will deliver on His promises and to bless His people.

This kind of hope—true hope—has an interesting way of affecting the human soul. When we have hope, we can live well through the worst things life could throw at us. But when we lack hope, we may lack the motivation to persevere, even when life is smooth and easy.

▪ What is your normal pattern in responding to trials when they enter your life?

People place their hope in many things. Yet sadly, if our hope isn't in Christ, it will eventually fail. Thankfully, Scripture promises that God's people have a living hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus has conquered death, He is alive, and He will never die, we can know that our hope will never die. The resurrection of Jesus is not just a noteworthy historic event. Rather, it is the reason for the believer's hope.

The good things that God has promised to His people, our inheritance, “is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (v. 4). The good news of Jesus will never change, no matter how the world tries to say otherwise. When we are rejected by the world, let's remember to place our hope in Jesus and to continue living for His glory—showing love to all, even those who treat us badly. In Jesus, we have a hope that will never fade, and even in the hardest of times, we have reason to rejoice. 

▪ How should Christ's resurrection change how we relate to suffering?

▪ In what ways can we guard ourselves from idolizing worldly treasures?

COMMENTARY

1 Peter 1

Main Point:
When we honor God through trials, the difference Jesus makes in our lives is made clear.

“Believers in Christ across Roman provinces were being persecuted for their faith. Nevertheless, not all persecution was physical, such as with the churches in Asia Minor to whom Peter was writing. Indeed, 1 Peter says nothing about Christians suffering physically for their faith. The focus is on the verbal abuse and discrimination they receive because of their Christian commitment (4:3-4). Of course, verbal abuse easily leads to physical mistreatment, and it is possible that some of the believers to whom Peter wrote were suffering physical abuse for their faith as well.”¹ In Peter’s day, traditional safety and security as we know it were nonetheless unknown realities. However, Peter’s writings inform God’s people of just the opposite: safe and secure treasure is attainable and is found in heaven, where Christ is (Col. 3:1).

Most people have an intrinsic desire to be safe and secure. It is the reason many people opt not to have strangers in their home out of fear that an outsider might steal valued possessions or perhaps attempt to take their very lives. It is the reason that, in American culture, security is a billion-dollar industry. However, when safety and security becomes the refuge of a person while their trust in God takes a backseat, idolatry may subtly be at hand.



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 32, DDG)

Life After Death

The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, he or she immediately is with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:43). This is what some people call an intermediate state, given that the final state for believers takes place at the future resurrection (Rev. 6:10-11). For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being separated from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future judgment remains (Luke 16:19-31).

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Peter 1:6-9.



Believers will face trials when following Jesus. In fact, in John 16:33, Jesus Himself guaranteed that, in this life, we will face difficulties for at least two reasons:

- We live in a fallen world where sin's curse brings suffering, even death, to all people.
- Christians, specifically, will face persecution for our faith in Christ.

When we suffer, we can know that God uses grief and various trials to refine our faith, shaping us more and more into the likeness of Jesus. Just like gold is purified through being exposed to fire, where the impurities are burned away, our faith is refined through fiery trials. Though it may be difficult to understand, we should be thankful that God matures our faith, even through hardships. When we go through challenging circumstances in a way that honors God, our faith is proven genuine. This allows us to have the peace and confidence that comes from knowing our faith is real. Further, honoring God through hard times is a powerful testimony to our neighbors.

The difference between a believer and a non-believer is not whether we will face suffering. All people experience suffering, but as believers, we have the hope of Jesus to help endure the trials that come. We have confidence that He will save our souls, even if our world as we know it is perishing.



- **How can you keep your focus on Jesus, rather than your circumstances, when you are walking through suffering?**

Read 1 Peter 2:11-17.



As strangers and outsiders living in this world, God's people will be hated and attacked purely because of our association with Christ. Yet, in the midst of the hate-induced passions of our present day culture, we are called to refuse to live according to our sinful desires—specifically, the sinful desire to seek vengeance toward those who persecute us. Instead, we are called to show kindness, and even honor, toward those who don't know God and mistreat us. The believer's spiritual reward of pleasing God by living righteously among the unrighteous outweighs the sacrifice involved. Certainly, God being lifted high and potentially believed upon by God-haters is worth the restraint necessary to live honorable.

Peter calls us to submit to human authorities not because they have earned it or are worthy of such submission. But because of the Lord. And when we do, especially in the face of hardship, the foolish who ignorantly and arrogantly oppose the believer have nothing negative to say and are, therefore, silenced.

- **Why is it sometimes hard to submit to earthly authorities? Is there ever a time we should not?**

God's people will endure all kinds of trials in this life. Though the heartache and pain from these trials are very real, we press through hard times with joy, keeping our eyes on Jesus, because eternity with Jesus make it all worth it.

COMMENTARY

1 Peter 1

Main Point:
When we honor God through trials, the difference Jesus makes in our lives is made clear.

“Peter knew far too well what it looked like to have his gaze set on Christ even when his world seemed to be crashing around him. Peter after all is the same disciple whom many historians believe was crucified upside down as a result of being a Christ follower in a culture of hostility.”³ We can imagine that Peter knew that the pending persecution that he wrote of was not in vain. It appears that he was looking fervently at the end goal of his soul being saved and the praise, honor, and glory to come.

More importantly, Christ Himself had an end goal in the midst of His suffering. Hebrews 12:2 states that it was because of “the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Christ endured the most agonizing suffering possible and did so with joy. Similarly, believers can confidently look to the Source and Perfecter of their faith and rejoice. We can rejoice knowing our joy isn’t circumstantial—it is rooted in our eternal Christ, whom we love, trust, and believe will not only eventually save us from our anguish.

Activity

As a large group, come up with a list of examples of suffering and trials. Your list should include both sufferings without anyone at fault (e.g., sickness, grief) and suffering with someone at fault (e.g., betrayal, slander); both sufferings we do not choose (e.g., a false accusation) and suffering we do choose (giving up free time to tutor someone else).

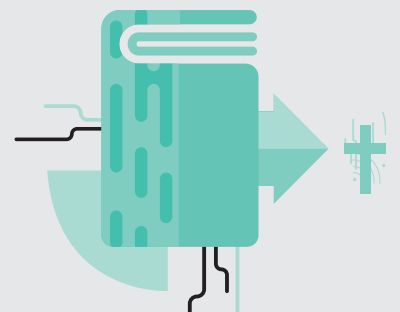
Once you have a good-sized list, ask each student to choose one example from the list. He or she should draw a picture showing someone experiencing that suffering. In the picture, the sufferer should show Christ in at least one of the three ways listed below (they are modifications of the three main points of the lesson):

- We show Christ in trials by looking to our imperishable treasure.
- We show Christ in trials by trusting those trials are temporary and perishable.
- We show Christ in trials by doing good, even to those who wrong us.

Students should make clear which of the three bullet points they chose and how it would impact the situation of their sufferer. If students would prefer to make a skit instead of drawing, tell them to choose one situation, but to enact that situation three different ways: one for each of the three bullet points of the lesson listed above. Debrief by talking about how suffering looks different when we use it to show Christ and when we don’t. What sufferings are your students experiencing? How might they use that suffering to show Christ this week?

(p. 34, DDG) Christ Connection

God’s people are called to endure life’s trials with hope, joy, and honor so that even those who wrong us might see the goodness of Christ through us. When we live in this way, we follow the pattern of Jesus who for the joy that lay before Him, endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). Because of Jesus’ obedience to the Father on the cross, we who wronged Him but now trust in Him have been saved.





SHOWING CHRIST IN TIMES OF TRIAL

When we honor God through trials, the difference Jesus makes in our lives is made clear.

JESUS CONNECTION



Jesus' followers are called to endure life's trials with hope, joy and honor so that even those who wrong us might see the goodness of Christ through us. When we live in this way, we follow the pattern of Jesus. Because of Jesus' obedience to the Father on the cross, we who wronged Him are able to be saved.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

PERSEVERANCE – Not giving up despite difficulties, failure or opposition.



HEAD

What inheritance is kept in Heaven for Jesus' followers? How is this inheritance described?

How are Jesus' followers instructed to live while going through trials?



HEART

Difficult experiences are not fun or easy, but they can have positive results. Think of something hard you went through and write down 1–2 ways that something good came from that hard time.

Why would knowing Jesus and the hope we have in Him help us persevere in hard times?



HANDS

When you are going through a trial, it is easier to persevere when you have a plan to work from. Use the acronym below to help you as you deal with difficult circumstances, now or in the future.

- ◆ **P** – Pray about what you’re facing
- ◆ **O** – Open up to a trusted friend or advisor
- ◆ **W** – Write down something God is teaching you or you are learning during this hard time
- ◆ **E** – Encourage or do something nice for someone else
- ◆ **R** – Remind yourself of all God has provided and thank Him for being with you